The Story Behind Eminem's '8 Mile' Battle That You Probably Haven't Seen

'8 Mile' is turning 13.
By Andres Tardio
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Eminem sitting in junkyard in a scene from the film '8 Mile', 2002. (Photo by Universal/Getty Images)
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Picture this: As an extra on the set of "8 Mile," you win a competition to battle Eminem. Thirteen years later, you can call Marshall Mathers your homie. Sounds like an improbable scenario, right? But that's exactly what happened to Marv Won.

Marv was one of many Detroit rappers who appeared as an extra in "8 Mile." He spent extended days -- from about 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. -- on that set. But those crazy hours didn't matter because "8 Mile," a film that celebrates its 13th anniversary Nov. 8, was an important moment for hip-hop.

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Eminem-Marv-3
"It was long days and long nights, but we were watching one of us do something huge," Marv told MTV News. "It was a super blessing."

So, how did an extra get to battle Eminem? At some point during filming, a competition was held. "I think they did it, really, just to keep the morale of the extras up because we were fading," Marv explained. "The competition winners would (maybe) appear in a silent "8 Mile" montage.

"Luckily," he added, "I was one of the people who was chosen."

The Battle

If you've ever watched Marv Won and Eminem's "8 Mile" battle on YouTube, then you know how this goes. If you haven't, here's a brief recap: Marv spits his bars. Then, Em raps silently, miming some lines for the silent footage. Then, out of nowhere, Shady turns his mic on and actually starts battling Marv. The extras, of course, lose their sh-t. But there was more to that little exchange.

"What a lot of people don't know is that on the parts where people think he's pantomiming, he was actually rapping," Marv explained. "His mic was just turned off. So, I hear him rapping, but I have no idea what he was saying. Then, all I remember is, as he was turning his mic on, he was like, 'Oh, I've got something for you, Marv. I've got somethin' for your fat ass.'"

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Eminem-Marv-2
I always wondered why Em decided to turn his mic on, when the plan was to spit silently.

"After I spit my verse, the crowd was loving me," Marv explained. "So, the competitor in him just couldn't let that go. I wish he wasn't as petty and I wish he was a bigger man and let me have my damn moment, but he didn't."

You can easily catch the sarcasm there, because Marv's also quick to give Em his props. "You could tell he was going off the dome and that was super impressive," he added. "He's the best f--king rapper in the world, man. What can you say to the best person doing something?"

The Aftermath

That scene was left on the cutting room floor, so movie goers didn't get to watch Marv's battle. But, when the DVD dropped, everything changed. All of a sudden, it was everywhere. "It was really huge for me because that was one of the main scenes they sold the DVD on," Marv explained. "That was the footage they sent to 'Entertainment Tonight,' 'Extra' and 'Access Hollywood.' It really helped my visibility."

Shortly after this started gaining buzz, Marv was invited to a party at Shady's crib, but there was a problem, or so he thought. "When I walked in, he wouldn't shake my hand," Marv recalled. "I was like, 'What the hell was that about?' He was like, 'I want a rematch.' I go, 'You want a rematch? Get the f--k outta here, bruh. You're rich. You already won!'"

The Bond

You might think that's where the story ends. And hey, even if it did, it'd be one helluva story. But when I asked Marv if he and Em stayed in touch since that party, his answer was enough to surprise almost anyone.

"I was with him yesterday," he said. "I was literally just with him yesterday."

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Eminem-Marv-Won-4
So let's get this straight: At one point, Marv was an extra in "8 Mile," and now, almost thirteen years after its release, he's just casually kickin' it with "8 Mile's" star? Yep. No big deal.

"We were just chopping it up," he explained. "I had to go handle some other business up at his office and he was there. We usually will just chop it up. We're pretty cool. I see him fairly often. That's my man. We don't ever talk about that battle, but we talk about battling a lot and about music. That's really my dude. That's my man."

The Impact

While Marv earned a friend with "8 Mile," hip-hop's battle scene earned recognition. That's part of the film's legacy, Marv explained. "It gave light to what us in the culture already knew," he said. "We already knew battling was big business. Since then, battling has gone on to become huge business. It may be the last pure form of hip-hop."

Marv, one of the more recognizable faces in the battle scene that Eminem, Drake and Diddy are huge fans of, also looks back on this experience with gratitude.

"I was able to be around the best rapper in the world and see him take his first steps into acting," he explained. "To have my name associated with it in any way shape or form is crazy for me. I'm always grateful for the opportunity."